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[Historical Georgia]

mind, had already created the wherewithal to satisfy its credulity—priesthoods which at once lived upon and satisfied "the believer". For the human mind in its pathetic aching for finality, for an attainable perfection, always sets up fetishes, the idealization of hopes and the contrary embodiment of fears—religions and social systems—that encumber it. And this will go on, in religion and in politics, until men realize, as they have been taught by experience, that there is no foreseeable finality; that all will change and that change is the salt of life; that faith rests in themselves; that divinity, untouchable and not to be imagined, rests here around ourselves and lies forward in the spaceless spaces of eternity. And so out of credulity, we have that great corporate body catering for credulity; and like a gigantic and fraudulent insurance upon the divinity of men, it sprawls across the ages —the community of priests. Therefore in approaching the history of Christianity in Georgia we do not seek to inquire when the Georgians became Christians, but when the priesthood in Georgia took over the forms of Christianity.

The Christian religion was introduced into Georgia in the fourth century A.D. under the influence of the Græco-Roman world. The Christian faith, in the pure elements of its early form certainly produced a revolution in the minds of the Georgians of the following centuries. The essential stem of early Christian faith is self-discipline, and in studying the psychology of the Georgians during different epochs, we can appreciate the real values of Christianity in its conversion of the human mind from the irresponsible ingenuousness of the pagan which is exemplified in Xenophon's account of the Mossynoekhoi, to the courageous self-discipline, the conscientious charity and the intellectual poise of the mediæval mind, of which in Georgia Queen Tamara, Sargisi of Tmogvi and King Dmitri II, are the best representative types.

Christianity in Georgia produced its many strong thinkers and its single-minded protagonists of faith. In the sixth century there were the remarkable missions to the Huns undertaken by Aghovanian monks to which reference has already been made. In the seventh century we read of the saintly life and martyrdom of Neophyte, Bishop of Urbnissi, and in the ninth century we find St. Grigoli of Khandzti fulminating from his monastery on the Chorokhi against the matrimonial aberrations of the Kuropalatês Adarnasé.

The Georgian Church went the way of all other churches. The bleak strong spirits built it—and passed into a memory

[Medieval Georgia]

RELIGION

771 revered and neglected by their sanctimonious successors. The priest-mind took the rough clean spirit of the Founder and the rugged sacrifices of these old and dim-remembered men who found in it a divine message for humanity; and violent and abortive, cunning and obsequious, the priest-mind turned it into the sour wine of the Mediæval church.

794 It is difficult to appreciate the extent to which the Church checked the development of human knowledge during the Middle Ages. Education was the preserve of the Church in Georgia, as in other countries of the Christian East and West. The wealth and the intellectual monopoly of the Church attracted to it much of the best human material of each successive century. This material was physically sterilized in the monasteries and mentally sterilized in the copying and illumination of sacred books and in the development of bleak theses upon futile religious controversies. Georgian ecclesiastical literature produced nothing of intellectual value with the exception of certain parts of the Annals and some historical manuscripts, and through the pages of these works there runs the endless thread of priestly perversion of the truth to suit the moral reclamations—or more frequently the purely material designs on property—of the Church. It was left to the wild growth of the troubadour literature—evolved under the free-thinking influence of the Persian poets and the Classic philosophers—to express the natural art and creative genius of the Georgian spirit.

795 659 The Georgian Church remained always in close alliance with the Greek. At an early period Greek ecclesiasts were active in Georgia, and Georgian monks were numerous in Syria and Greece. The Georgian Church was originally subordinate to the Patriarchs of Antioch, but the Armenian Church exercised a closer influence on Georgian ritual and dogma, until, in the second half of the fifth century, the decisions of the Council of Chalchedon produced the Schism which led to the separation of the Armenian from the Greek Church. Thenceforward the Georgians, following in the train of Greek religious thought, carried on a long and often politically disastrous feud with the Armenians, although both David the Restorer and Tamara called Councils in an attempt to reconcile the dogmatic scruples of the contending priests. At the same time the Churches of Byzantium and Georgia were closely associated. The Byzantine Emperors endowed churches in Georgia, and made donations for the restoration of others

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

795 771 With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom was divided, the authority of the Church became divided too.

795 771 793 The writ of the Catholicos of Mtzkheta ceased to extend beyond Kartli. The King of Imereti revived the Catholicosate of Abkhazeti which henceforward exercised a shadowy authority over the Western Caucasus and the Rioni valley; and in Kakheti the Bishop of Alaverdi, in Mingrelia the Metropolitan of Bedia, in Guria the Bishop of Shemokhmedi, followed the separatist tendencies of the local rulers. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by or conferred as rewards upon the relatives of the different ruling princes. The nobles, demoralized by the humiliating political conditions, which often compelled them to embrace Islam, to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating with admirable impartiality the feast-days of both.

The Kartlian kings were frequently required by the Shahs to profess an outward devotion to Islam, and Pitton de Tournefort gives us an amusing picture of the religious exercises of the ruler, contemporary with his visit.

> "Le Prince de Tiflis", he says, "étoit du Rite Grec, mais on l'obligea de se faire circoncire. On dit que ce malhereux professoit les deux religions, car il alloit à la Mosquée et venoit à la Messe chez les Capucins, ôu il beuvoit à la santé de la Saintête." [1]

771 136 Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this, in reality, took the form of national feeling against the Persians and Turks.

[1] Pitton de Tournefort, *Relation d'un Voyage du Levant* (Paris, 1717), tome II, p. 310.

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[Medieval Georgia]

RELIGION

At the end of the seventeenth century, in Tiflis, Persian preparations to build a mosque could still arouse enough resentment to provoke a riot.[1]

A few of the rulers, particularly in Kartli and Kakheti, made some efforts to maintain their spiritual integrity in spite of adverse political conditions. The heroic Queen Ketevani of Kakheti, an elderly woman, suffered torture and execution in the Shah's prisons rather than abandon her faith, and King Wakhtang VI of Kartli preferred to relinquish his throne rather than conform outwardly—as many of his predecessors had done and his successors would do—to the Islamic creed. But amid the inconsequent but sturdy adherence of the peasantry to the faith of their fathers and their nation, and the courageous fidelity of an occasional ruler in the Georgian Kingdoms, the generality of the nobles and the priests led a spiritual life of irresponsible depravity.

Chardin, who bases his account upon personal observation and upon the manuscript made for him by Brother Zampi, a Théatin of Mantua who had lived for twenty years in Georgia, gives a lamentable account of the state of the Christian religion in Mingrelia.

> "The priests of Mingrelia", he says, "are very numerous; and a sort of miserable creature that live upon whatever they can get. . . . There needs no more than to be able to read and say a Mass by Heart, to be admitted into the Priesthood. . . . Nor is it to be imagined how the Priests are contemn'd and scorn'd. . . . Now that which

> causes this contempt is their ignorance their Gluttony and their Poverty. Their Poverty is so great that they go Barefoot, and in Tatters that hardly cover their Tails. . . . There are but few churches which have any Bells, but they call the people together by knocking with a good big Stick upon a Board. . . . The Parish Churches are more

[1] Chardin (1686), pp. 209–10.

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[Medieval Georgia]

791 793 Nasty than Stables; the Images mangl'd and brok'n and cover'd with Dust and Spiders.

"... The Ornaments of the Altar are nothing but a few Nasty Tatter'd Clouts, torn and stain'd with Wine. ... But the Cathedrals are very clean and well-adorn'd. And I could wish, that every Bishop had as much care of the Education and Instruction of his Flock, as he has of the Cleansing and Adorning of his Church. There are six Bishops in Mingrelia, but those Prelates take no care of the Souls of their Flocks, nor do they ever visit their Churches in their Dioceses. ... The chief Imployment of the Bishops is continued Feasting and Banqueting, where they are Drunk almost every day: they are Rich and go Sumptuously Habited; their Principal Revenue arising from what they Spunge from Their Vassals, and the price of the Women and Children which they sell to the Turks." [1]

[1] Chardin, pp. 95 *et seq.*; for the state of religion in Kartli see Chardin further, and Pitton de Tournefort, Vol. II, pp. 301 *et seq.*

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439 Shooes and in a word in all things most necessary for Man's use. There were all sorts of Grocery and Pothecary's Ware, Spices, Perfumes, Drugs and all manner of Oyntments. So that the vessel seemed to be a little Town, where everything was to be had." [1]

[436] Almost all the foreign trade was transacted by barter, and both Chardin and Pitton de Tournefort found that the people preferred to be paid for goods in stuffs and trinkets rather than in currency.

197 The long period of perpetual contact, both commercial and political, with their powerful Mussulman neighbours had a profound effect on the peoples of the Caucasus. The more highly civilized Georgians and Armenians, strong in the antique traditions of East Christian culture, were outwardly affected in modes and habits and some ways of thought; the peoples of the mountains, who had not by the fifteenth century emerged from the tribal state, forgot their thin Christianity and became Muslim in culture as well as in outward fashion. Not only did Islam penetrate the remoter valleys of Circassia, but it became the religion of the relatively civilized Meskhians and Abkhaz.[2]

[771] The easy religious casuistry of the Georgian princes was natural to them as well as convenient to their political interests. In the seventeenth century the old mediæval culture of Christendom, which had flourished in the Kingdom of Georgia, was half-forgotten, and it was only the more sensitive spirits who were prepared still to make sacrifices in the [341] memory of its tradition. The new architecture of Tiflis, in the Mukhranian days, was altogether in the Muslim style; 562 dress, manners, furnishing, were Persian. The position of women was also affected and Chardin noted a tendency, since the Persian rule began in Tiflis, towards the seclusion of women. They went veiled in the streets, while in the country districts, where there were no Mussulmans, they still adhered to the Christian custom.[3]

181 The travellers of the seventeenth century are none too generous in their appraisal of the Georgian character. Chardin has a long diatribe on the Georgians, and he condemns their immorality, their drunkenness, their knavery and their arrogance. But even he admits, by contrary, that "*they are Civil and Courteous and more than that, they are Grave and Moderate*".[4]

[1] Chardin, p. 75.
[2] For the progress of Islam in Samtzkhé during the seventeenth century, see Wakhushti, *Histoire de Samtzkhé*, in Brosset, *H. de la G.*, II, i, 232–3.
[3] Chardin, p. 226. [4] *Idem.*, p. 191.

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churches and monasteries sprang up, constructed at great cost by architects, stonemasons and woodcarvers imported from Byzantium. The churches were full of gorgeous vestments, of rare illuminated holy books, of miraculous relics presented by noble devotees returned from the Holy Land, of costly gold and silver vessels. At the boards of the Catholicos and of his bishops holy men and their lay guests feasted to their full on the first fruits of the land. And the Church was chosen by the cadets of the aristocracy as a career more lucrative and more pleasing than service at the Court, or in the trains of the great *didebuls*.

With the fall of the national monarchy and the predominance of the Mussulman powers began the decline of the Georgian Church. The Turkish capture of Constantinople severed all connection with the Greeks, who had so profoundly influenced every aspect of Georgian religious life, its doctrines, its rites and its architecture. Finally when the Georgian Kingdom split, the Church split too. The influence and efficiency of the clergy speedily declined. All the European travellers in Georgia during the seventeenth century unite in condemning their ignorance, their drunkenness, their immorality and their levity. The bishops were hardly to be distinguished from the ordinary feudal proprietors, and their seats were bought and sold by, or conferred as rewards upon, the relatives of the different ruling princes. The aristocracy, demoralised by the humiliating political conditions which often compelled them to embrace Islam, and forced them to send their sons in hostage to be educated by the Mullahs of Isfahan, or to give their daughters into Persian or Turkish harîms, had assumed a cynical indifference towards their religion. They combined Mussulman polygamy with Christian drunkenness, and interested themselves in either religion only to the extent of celebrating, with admirable impartiality, the feast-days of both.

Only among the peasantry and the artisan class did any true religious sentiment survive, and this for the most part took the form of national feeling against the Persians. For the rest, the peasants clung to a number of superstitions dignified with the name of Christianity. But the churches were in ruins and for the most part unfrequented. Chardin has something cynical to say about their condition: "Les Géorgiens . . . ont une coûtume assez étrange de bâtir la plupart des églises sur le haut des montagnes. . . . On les voit et on les salue en cet éloignement, de trois ou quatre lieues; mais on n'y va jamais; et l'on peut bien assurer que la plupart

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ne s'ouvrent pas une fois en dix ans. Je n'ai jamais pu découvrir le motif de cette extravagance. . . . Je crois, pour moi, qu'ils les édifient en des lieux inaccessibles pour éviter de les orner et de les entretenir."

In their buildings the Georgians closely followed the architectural principles of the Byzantines and the Persians. The ruins of three very fine early examples (Ouplos, Darbasse and Vardzia)[1] still exist, and in the seventeenth century we have accounts of some great palaces built precisely like those of Persia. The houses of the lesser gentry were rough, two-storied, timber barns, roofed with clay or wooden tiles, frequently burnt down during the incessant civil wars, and easily rebuilt. The large living-room usually accommodated a number of domestic animals. "Les maisons," to quote Chardin, "sont fort incommodes et fort sales; elles n'ont ni cheminées ni fenêtres, le feu s'y fait au milieu, le jour y entre par la porte." The peasants lived more miserably still. Their huts were for the most part troglodytic, and all that was to be seen of them by a traveller riding past were the rough roofings of timber and earth, on which vegetables were flourishing and where the women lazed in the evening. A distinctive feature of Georgian houses of the better class were wide balconies, running the length of the building and furnished with divans, where the master and his guests would eat and drink and lounge away the afternoon and, during the hot season, sleep. Castles, consisting of a keep or donjon, surrounded by stables and other buildings, the whole protected by a wall and ditch, were scattered about the country, and formed the strongholds and treasuries, but infrequently the residences, of the princes. They afforded a refuge to the countryside in time of war.

The towns of Georgia were insignificant, wretched collections of mud-and-timber houses, built so close together that "il est souvent plus facile de cheminer sur les toits que par les rues." Tiflis, the stronghold of Persian political influence, and hence the centre of Transcaucasian politics, alone might claim to be a city. As the chief market-town of the Kur Valley, it brought farmers and merchants from all over the Caucasus, to buy and sell wine and silk and wool and cotton, horses and cattle and arms, while its famous mineral springs attracted wealthy invalids from Tabriz and Isfahan. Its bazaars and caravanserais, "bâtis de pierres et bien entretenus," were always crowded and busy—"on y voit autant de sortes d'étrangers

[1] Situated respectively near Gori, Kutais and Akhaltsikh.

6: Grigolia E-4, 5 (no date) 1939 RI1 Georgia RI1
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CHAPTER III

Religious Beliefs and Practices

The religion of the Georgian Highlanders penetrates the very thought and actions of each individual as well as the whole community of which he is a member. Obedience to the custom is vital for the well-being not only of the person involved but of his whole community. The social group is the guaranty, the defender and the guardian of every member. The obedience to the custom has a religious obligation; its disobedience is a religious sanction.

We are not attempting at present to go into the analysis of the religious beliefs and ceremonies in detail or try to explain their meaning or origin, although it offers a very interesting field of research. Only by way of information we will point out that the special works representing the scientific investigation of the primitive religion of the peoples of the Caucasus, and particularly of the Georgians, are few; and we may cite the words of the Georgian scholar, Professor M. Tseretheli[1] as clearly illustrating the situation "that Georgian paganism represents such a complicated subject for research, that science still has much to do to unravel its tangled elements." If the special works are few, the information of the general character treating the primitive religion in the Caucasus is abundant, but here also the difficulty is present that they are either scattered in different essays and monographs of ethnological, geographical, archeological, historical and general descriptive character, or they are written in languages of little access to the European reader, such as Georgian and Russian.

From the few leading works dealing specially with the primitive religion of the Georgians we have to mention as examples the works of O. V. von Wesendonk,[2] N. Marr,[3] M. Tseretheli,[4] and Javakhishvili.[5]

[1] Tseretheli: b.
[2] Wesendonk: a, b.
[3] Marr: a.
[4] Tseretheli: b.
[5] Javakhishvili: b.

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114 Professor I. Javakhishvili of Tiflis, a well-known Georgian historian,[6] gives us a picture of the religion of pagan Georgia in the second chapter of his standard work, *A History of the Georgian Nation* (Vol. 1, Ch. 2, pp. 31-137), which is a result of his research into the customs and usages, tales and sagas of the Georgians.

771 Our aim at present is simply to review in outline form the religion of the Georgian Highlanders, principally in connection with the role which it plays in their legal life.

Surveying the religious institutions and beliefs of the Georgian Highlanders, we notice a marked mixture of Christianity and primitive beliefs. Besides the symptoms of Christian teaching, such as the names of saints, the belief in angels, the conduct of various Christian ceremonies although in distorted form, they believe in the supernatural, not as the Christian Church understands and interprets it as one identity, but as many spirits endowed with anthropomorphic qualities. The supernatural powers, the spirits, are discriminated by the people, not only according to their power, but also according to their inclinations. Some of them are regarded as the protectors of hunters, others of herds and husbandry, and a third group are the benefactors of thieves, robbers, etc. The people believe that these "spiritual beings are held to affect or control events in the material world and man's life here and hereafter."[7] Besides these spirits representing supernatural beings, the Georgian Highlanders believe also in the existence of spirits representing "souls of individual creatures, capable of continued existence after the death or destruction of the body."[8]

The religious beliefs of the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes are almost identical, conserved in purest and most complete form by the Pshavs and the Khevsurs, and in a state of change and transformation by the Tushes, who are gradually giving up their old customs under the influence of their cultured kinsmen of the Lowlands. The religion of the Svans is similar in the principal things, but different in details from that of the Khevsurs, Pshavs and Tushes.

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[6] Tseretheli: b, 28.
[7] Tyler: I, 426.
[8] *Ibid.*

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Up to the present time it is impossible to determine with certainty what kind of religion the Pshavs and Khevsurs profess.[9] While respecting the cross, St. George, the apostles Peter and Paul, and Archangel Michail, at the same time they worship such gods as Anatori, Nakharela, Pirkushi, Kopala, Iakhsari, and many others. These tribes were converted to Christianity by some Georgian preacher, but having no support from anybody, the religion grew weak owing to the ignorance of this half-savage people. I am convinced of this by the prayers which their *dekanozi*[10] say and which are taken from the Church, and by their veneration of some of our saints. The Khevsurs do not believe that God is one identity. They have the following gods: the god of East; the god of West; the god of souls; Christ-God; the small god; and the great god. Besides these, they also worship *Adgilis-deda,* meaning the mother of the place; *Mukhis angelozi,* the angel of the oak; *Goris angelozi,* the angel of the mountain; *Unjis angelozi,* the angel of property; *Did-gori,* big mountain; *Thethri-Georgi,* White George; and others. From the above stated it is clear "that the Khevsurs created in their imagination the special angel-protectors to whom the Pshavs pay very little esteem, but in their turn they worship *Lasharis-jvari; Thamar-mepe,* the queen Thamar; *Kopale,* and others. Incidentally, it should be noted that the Pshavs regard as saints Queen Thamar and her son, called *Lasha Georgi* or *Lashiani Georgi* (flapmouthed George).

This same mixture of primitive beliefs and Christianity prevails also among the Svans. The Svans admit the existence of separate gods for every people on earth, for the Mohammedan peoples as well as for their neighbors and kinsmen, the Georgians of Lechkum and Ratcha, and for themselves.[11] They also believe in the existence of special angels of the forests and mountains and in the protectors of game. Accordingly, when they go into the mountains and woods on hunting expeditions, the Svans pray to their imagined local deities of the country or place in question, asking their co-operation and the success of their enterprise.

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[9] Eristov: 96.
[10] *Dekanozi*—an attendant of the sanctuary.
[11] Gulbiani: 88.

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771 776 Consequently, if successful in hunting, the Svan considers it his duty to bring, first of all, a thank-offering to the deity—the protector of game—in order to appease him and secure his help in the future.[12] The Svans usually bring their sacrifices to highly situated places. To insure the success of individuals as well as the prosperity of the country as a whole, the Svan generally subscribes to the protection of the local deity. In spite of such opinions, the Svans have a notion of the Christian Trinity, although obscure. They were converted to Christianity, as were the Khevsurs, Pshavs, and Tushes, in the historic past, and therein may lie the historical explanation of the fall and degeneration of Christianity in Svanetia as well as elsewhere in the Georgian Highlands. Historical records clearly demonstrate that the Svans and their land formed a part of the Georgian kingdom.[13] It is known that from the time of Queen Tamar's father the Georgian chronicles divided the whole of Georgia into seven parts according to the seven territories inhabited by the Georgian nation; and in the formation of these seven provinces, Svanetia was included.

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Besides their political affiliation, the Svans had other ties with Georgia in their religious life. The great number of ruined and ancient churches, containing numerous preserved manuscripts, icons, crosses, etc., proves that efforts were made by the kings of Georgia to spread and strengthen the Christian faith in Svanetia. The number of churches there is very large; they are found even in the most insignificant villages; in some there are as many as five or six.[14] They are especially numerous in Free Svanetia, many half-dilapidated and ruined churches and sacred places where, according to tradition, churches once stood. In Ushkul, for example, there are twenty such ruins.

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795 Examining the old Georgian ordinances, called *gujaras,* we find that the Georgian clergy exercised a great influence upon Svanetia, where it appears Christianity was at that time solidly established. The church of Svanetia stood under the rule of the Abkhazian,

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[12] The details concerning this subject are brought out in the chapter on Contract and Group Solidarity.

[13] Bakradze: a, 29.

[14] *Ibid.,* 34.

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C. G. 361 342 over the wooden lattice of the horizontal roof frame. These flat roofs are also much used for growing cereals, vegetables, curing meat, etc. The sakhli is also the common type of house in most parts of Anatolia and Iran, where we also find the staircase-like arrangement of the sakhlis on the mountain slopes.

C. G. 628 These are the lands where the kings of Sak'art'velo or the Emirs and Khans of Shirvan and Arran had no say, nor did the Caliph in Baghdad or the Roman Emperor have any authority, with the result that feuds were fought right on the spot. Thus, there were times when not only one aul fought another, but even one clan or family fought another within the same aul. Hence the many small castles; hence a man always carried his kinzhal; hence such customs as the vendetta, the qan-alma (Turkic: "taking of blood"), which have been preserved there down to the present time. Svanet'ia consists of three small lands: Free Svanet'ia, Svanet'ia of the Dadishkeliani, and Svanet'ia of the Dadiani, the latter two named after the families of their former overlords. Many pagan elements are found in the Eastern Orthodox religion of these valiant mountaineers, although to a lesser degree than is true of the Oset'i, as mentioned above, or some of the Dagestanians, who were later converted to Islam.

C. G. 631

C. G. 771

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C. G. 777 177 The major religions in the Caucasus are Christianity (Georgians except Adzhar and Ingilo; Armenians except Hemshily; Ossetes except Digor; Udi) and Islam (all the rest, except the Mountain Jews and Yezid). But many traces of the older pagan religious view remain. Among the mountaineers in the N. W. Caucasus Islam was introduced comparatively recently (seventeenth century), and in many cases reached only the upper classes. In Dagestan, with its stronger Islamic tradition, the ancient beliefs have disappeared to a much larger extent. In Georgia, Christianity has absorbed many pagan features, and among the Kartvelian mountaineers it was rather paganism that adopted certain outward characteristics of Christianity. In the N. W. Caucasus, the pre-Islamic pagan religion preserved curious vestiges of Christianity which had been introduced from Georgia in the time of queen Tamar, and perhaps even earlier. Here and there in the Caucasus there are remains of the influence of Zoroastrianism.

C. G. 778 The old Caucasian religion was closely connected with family and sib organization. It centered around the house-hearth, above which hung the cooking pot, suspended from an iron chain (Georg. sak'ide(be)li), which had a symbolic value and was believed to be endowed with supernatural powers. It could not

C. G. 793 hereditary rights. The priest, called khevis beri "elder of the valley," khutsi "priest" or dek'anozi "dean," pronounced the ceremonial C. G. [782] prayers and sacrificed the sheep and cows offered as victims. The kadagi or dzhvaris C. G. [791] meene "interpreter," "tongue of the dzhvari," a kind of shaman, pronounced the will of the khat'i. The medroshe "standard bearer" or khat'is pekhi "foot of the khat'i" carried the sacred banner (drosha) on festive days. A special functionary attended to the brewing of the sacred beer, a custom borrowed from the C. G. [796] Ossetes. The beer was drunk at the annual festivals which were attended by all the "serfs" of the khat'i.

In Svanetia the functions of the Khevsur khevis beri were performed by priests not regularly ordained and without any theological training; they were called bap (from Greek C. G. [771] pappas). The numerous ancient churches were neglected and were only used for storing the vessels, vestments and books relating to the divine service; these were jealously C. G. 796 guarded from alienation. Many originally Christian feasts and Saint's days were celebrated with prayers, drinking of home-made brandy and eating of sacrificed animals and C. G. [769] fancy bread of different traditional shapes. Similar rites were observed on the commemoration days of the dead which were performed at fixed intervals.

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C. G. 771 [783] Traces of Zoroastrianism are preserved in the idea of the uncleanness of women, especially when menstruating or with child, and of corpses, as found among the Georgian mountaineers; further in some Georgian words, e. g. dzhodzhokheti "hell" (cf. M. Pers. dushakhw). C. G. [778] Remnants of Christianity in the N. W. Caucasus were the custom of planting a cross in the ground near a sacred grove, or hanging it in a sacred tree before a ceremony; further the seven-day week and the C. G. [805] names of the days, which are partly translations or mutilations of Greek names. In Abkhazia a number of Byzantine churches have been preserved.